



Contact: Rebecca Dailey | rdailey@shelbyfarmspark.org | O: (901) 222-7259 | C: (901) 569-6278

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shelby Farms Park Conservancy
6489 Mullins Station Road
Memphis, TN 38134

JEN ANDREWS NAMED SHELBY FARMS PARK CONSERVANCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Memphis, TN – Shelby Farms Park Conservancy – which is transforming 4,500-acre Shelby Farms Park into America’s great 21st century urban park – has appointed 32-year-old Jen Andrews as its next executive director, effective March 21, 2016.

“This is my heart’s work. It’s a project I’ve been committed to for a long time and to be selected after an exhaustive national search process is a great honor,” said Andrews. “I’m excited to lead the park’s outstanding team, and my top priority is to make sure we deliver on the promises made in the master plan and on our community’s hopes and dreams for this treasured public asset.”

Andrews was hired in 2006 as the first employee of the Conservancy - then called Shelby Farms Park Alliance – and rose to become director of development and communications, developing the Park’s brand and leading the organization’s \$70 million capital campaign. She will follow Laura Wolff Morris, who has served as executive director since July, 2010, and announced her retirement last October. Barbara Hyde, co-chair of the search committee and former chair of the Conservancy board of directors, said: “Jen is a 21st century leader for a 21st century park. Despite her youth, she demonstrated the right skill set and deepest passion for the work, making her

the clear choice. She ensures a seamless transition and a powerful passing of the torch to the next generation."

Tom Grimes, chairman of the Conservancy board of directors, said: "Shelby Farms Park is a world-class park and deserves a world-class executive director. We are very pleased that the best candidate turned out to be the park's own Jen Andrews. Her knowledge of the park is unrivaled, and her thoughtful, inclusive, and transparent leadership style is well-suited to lead Shelby Farms Park as the country's next great urban park."

Hyde said the "genuine, thoughtful, deep national search process was committed to finding someone who could lead the park forward in its next chapter. We were encouraged that Shelby Farms Park attracted so many candidates from across the country and that people at the forefront of the park world are already aware of its progress and potential. It's a real credit to Laura (Morris) that an internal candidate rose to the top, and it reaffirmed that we have great leadership right here in Memphis." Following her graduation from Rhodes College in 2006, Andrews was hired as office manager in charge of communications and daily operations. In her current job as director of development and communications, she directs fundraising, media relations, communications, marketing, government relations, special events, and programs.

"I look forward to watching her make the park her own," said Morris. "She is exceptionally bright, a master communicator, fearless, always hungry to learn, and one of the best development professionals I've ever seen. She's a gifted orchestrator, which is exactly what this project needs now."

The Conservancy's \$52 million "Heart of the Park" project will open in late summer or early autumn. Its centerpiece is Patriot Lake, which has been expanded from 52 to 80 acres and has been made environmentally sustainable. The lake will be surrounded by a new visitor center with a large covered porch, gift shop, and café; an event center with a restaurant; a music and event pavilion; lakeside pavilions; wetland and forest walks; boat rental kiosks; a cycling trail around the lake, and a pedestrian promenade adjacent to the lake's edge.

The Conservancy previously opened the Shelby Farms Greenline, 6.5 mile urban trail connecting Shelby Farms Park to Midtown Memphis; the Wolf River Pedestrian Bridge, and the award-winning Woodland Discovery Playground. The Greenline is set to expand eastward with an additional 4 miles opening in early summer.

"Shelby Farms Park is special, and it has the potential to lift our entire community by being a reflection of the diversity that makes Memphis unique and beautiful," Andrews said. "It's a place where people come for free and as equals, to play, exercise, gather with others or get away from it all. It's a celebration of urban life and also an escape from it. "

Andrews has been deeply involved in all aspects of the park's operations. She developed its pacesetting public engagement programs that involved the community in selecting the master plan for the park and opened robust communication channels with the public as shown by Shelby Farms Park's 52,300 friends on Facebook and 25,000 Twitter followers.

“Public engagement and visitor experience are at the heart of all we do at the Conservancy,” said Andrews. “Our focus and commitment to the people who love the park is why we’ve succeeded and why we’ll continue to succeed.”

In addition to the public engagement program, she is proud of “building a great team.” “Shelby Farms Park has a magical ability to attract the most talented, creative, positive, committed people – volunteers, board members, and staff. Our staff has grown from two people to 30 people who truly believe in the power of the park.” The Heart of the Park project is “the biggest project we’ve done and will ever do,” she said, adding that “we want everyone who visits the park to experience world-class hospitality, and leave with a sense of pride and ownership.” She said the Heart of the Park will act as the hub for Shelby Farms Park, the revenues generated there will allow the Conservancy to support projects like repairing trails and restoring ecosystems in other parts of the park.

Raised in the small farm town of Marianna, Arkansas, Andrews moved to Memphis to attend Rhodes College, where she graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in English literature.

She is a frequent panelist on parks, nonprofit organizations, and wellness; a member of Sigma Tau Delta, National English Honor Society; recipient of *Memphis Flyer’s* “Top 20 under 30,” and a graduate from New Memphis Institute’s Fellows Program and Leadership Memphis’ Fast Track Program. She also has received awards of excellence from American Advertising Federation’s Memphis Chapter and from Public Relations Society of America’s Memphis Chapter.

ABOUT SHELBY FARMS PARK CONSERVANCY (SFPC): Shelby Farms Park Conservancy is the 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that is working to help Shelby Farms Park reach its potential as a celebrated urban park that defines and shapes a great city. SFPC manages and operates the 4,500 acres of Shelby Farms Park and 6.5 miles of Shelby Farms Greenline. Each year, SFPC privately raises more than \$2 million (more than 75 percent of its operating budget) to keep the Park and Greenline clean, green and safe.

ABOUT SHELBY FARMS PARK: At 4,500 acres, Shelby Farms Park in Memphis, Tennessee is one of the largest urban parks in the country. With a visionary master plan designed by James Corner Field Operations, it’s poised to become one of the best. Today, the Park features miles of paved and unpaved trails, hundreds of acres of woodlands, dozens of lakes and ponds, the new Woodland Discovery Playground, a buffalo herd, meadows, grasslands, pavilions, a Go Ape Treetop Adventure Course and more.

ABOUT HEART OF THE PARK (Opening Summer of 2016): Heart of the Park is a visionary reimagining of Patriot Lake - a well-loved but ecologically dysfunctional lake in the center of the Park. The Heart of the Park will become a vibrant and diverse community hub, an environmental teaching tool, an important part of the business plan to sustain the Park, a gathering place for health and recreation, relaxation and big water adventure. It will be an exemplar for innovative urban landscape design, environmentally responsive architecture, and world class programming for health, happiness and inclusion for the Mid-South.

A new Visitor Center will include education space, a cafe, a gift shop and a big front porch where visitors can watch sailboats and kayaks on the lake. A new boat rental kiosk will allow visitors to rent canoes, kayaks and paddle boats. A signature restaurant and event center on the east end of the Heart of the Park will offer a dramatic view of the expanded lake. Children will enjoy a new water playground, along with an educational Wetland Walk. The project features new meadows and grasslands, more than 4 miles of new trails and thousands of new trees. You can see more information, including an animated video [here](#).

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